

Date: September 4, 2015
To: Authorized Representatives and Food Service Directors of School Food Authorities (SFAs) Participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs
From: Jessica Sharkus, RDN, CD
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Subject: Professional Standards

On July 1, 2015, the requirements outlined in the USDA final rule, “*Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*” went into effect. The purpose of this final rule was to establish minimum professional standards for school nutrition personnel who manage and operate the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program. It institutes hiring standards for the selection of State and local school nutrition Program Directors and requires all personnel in the school nutrition programs to complete annual continuing education/training.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) School Nutrition Team (SNT) [memo dated April 30, 2015](#), outlines the specific requirements put forth in the final rule. This memorandum is to provide clarifications, highlight resources, and provide links that answer frequently asked questions.

State Agency (DPI) Discretions

The USDA allowed for State agency (DPI) discretion for some very specific details.

Discretion Area	DPI Decision
1. The second option for each local education agency (LEA) size says “Bachelor’s degree, or equivalent educational experience, with any academic major or area of concentration, and a State-recognized certificate for school nutrition directors”. What is acceptable as a State-recognized certification?	The DPI is working on creating a State-recognized certificate, which will be signed by the State Superintendent, recognizing a variety of classes that were taken. Certificates provided by the School Nutrition Association or other associations may be applied toward the State-recognized certificate but not replace it.
2. Do acting personnel, temporary workers, and volunteers need to complete annual training?	Yes, all acting personnel, temporary workers, and volunteers (occasional and regular) need to complete annual training. They should receive basic training in civil rights and job specific training, such as food safety, offer versus serve, and/or point of service depending on the position

Discretion Area	DPI Decision
	in which they work. They should receive a minimum of four hours of training on an annual basis.
3. For small LEAs, less than 500 students, the State agency has the discretion to approve an LEA’s hiring of a school nutrition Program Director that has a high school diploma (or GED) but less than the 3 years of relevant program experience. Is this acceptable?	Yes, this is acceptable, but the school nutrition Program Director should have at least 1 year of relevant program experience.
4. Are temporary or acting school nutrition Program Directors, who are expected to work more than 30 business days, required to meet the hiring standards?	Yes, it is important to ensure the integrity and quality of School Nutrition Programs. Therefore, all staff must be trained in job-specific topics.
5. Will the State agency impose stricter standards that would require current school nutrition Program Directors, regardless of their starting date, and all employees involved in food handling to be certified in food safety every 5 years?	No, DPI will not impose stricter standards. However, Act 46, a new Wisconsin law passed this summer states that any operator of a school lunch room must hold a certificate of food protective practices from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. One person in each district must have this certificate to be compliant with the law. This person should be the one responsible for food safety in the district and should work with schools to ensure safe food is being served to Wisconsin students.
6. Will the State agency consider assessing compliance of the training requirement over the period of 2 years instead of just the current year?	Yes, DPI will allow school nutrition program staff to complete the training requirement over a 2 year period. However, some hours need to be obtained in both years. For example, if you are a school nutrition Program Director and are required to have 8 hours of training for SY 2015-16 and 12 hours for SY 2016-17, the director can receive 6 hours for SY 2015-16 and 14 hours for SY 2016-17.

Frequently Asked Questions

On June 26, 2015, USDA released policy memorandum [SP 39-2015](#), *Questions & Answers on the Final Rule “Professional Standards for State and Local School Nutrition Programs Personnel as Required by the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010”*. This guidance memorandum includes many questions submitted by program operators on specific aspects of the regulation.

A common question that we receive is whether or not each SFA needs to have a Director. The answer is yes. Each SFA must designate at least one staff member as a Program Director. Program Director is the person designated to perform the majority of the program duties such as sanitation, food safety, nutrition and menu planning, food production, procurement, financial management, record keeping, marketing, customer service, nutrition education, and general day to day program management.

We also recently received this guidance from USDA on additional questions submitted.

1. Question: How many hours of training are required for Assistant Managers and Assistant Directors each year?

Response: The final rule does not establish specific training requirements for Assistant Managers and Assistant Directors. If the Assistant Manager and Assistant Director do not hold the primary responsibility of the “manager” and “director” position as defined in the final Professional Standards regulation, then they would have to meet the annual training requirements for non-managerial food service staff. Therefore, they would have to meet 4 hours in SY 2015-16 and 6 hours beyond that. If working less than 20 hours per week, they would have to complete 4 hours of annual training.

2. Question: When School Food Service Directors receive training and then turn around and provide the same training to their staff, can Food Service Directors count both trainings as part of their training hours? For example, if they receive 1 hour of training and then provide 1 hour of training to their staff, can they get credit for 2 hours?

Response: Yes; a “train-the-trainer experience” that allows a SFA Director to receive and disseminate knowledge may count toward the Director’s annual training hours. However, if the SFA Director is teaching food safety twice to two different groups, she/he may only count teaching it once toward required continuing education hours.

3. Question: If a school has part time employees with cognitive disabilities, do they have to also meet training requirements?

Response: All staff members that are involved in the operation of the NSLP must complete appropriate training that is related to their job duties. If necessary, the Program Director should discuss the training content and format for this individual with the State agency.

We will continue to provide guidance as we receive it. We will post a Professional Standards Frequently Asked Questions document on our website as we receive clarifications and further guidance from USDA related to Professional Standards. Additional information will be posted to our [Professional Standards](#) website.

Please note: Some trainings presented by the DPI SNT, USDA, and other professional organizations have assigned [Learning Topics and Learning Codes](#) relevant to the training content. It is advisable to use the general codes, but it is not a requirement to specify the Learning Codes for trainings to credit toward continuing education hours.

Available Resources

USDA has a webpage dedicated to [professional standards](#). It contains the final rule, grant information, a training tracking tool, and other resources to assist in implementing the professional standards.